

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

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Summary: As his vision began to fade, Hiccup wondered how he had gotten into this situation in the first place. Oh, yeah. He left the house without Toothless. DISCLAIMER: I do not own HTTYD.

## Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Hiccup tried in vain, once again, to take in a proper breath of air. The heavy boulder was pressed firmly into his stomach, and squirm and push and twist all the wanted, Hiccup could not get out from under it. He knew the short, gasping breaths of air he was able to get would not be enough for his body. As his vision began to fade, he wondered how he had gotten into this situation in the first place.

Oh, yeah. He left the house without Toothless.

**\*\*earlier\*\***

Exactly one year ago today, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III had gained the trust and friendship of the fearsome Night Fury named Toothless. Hiccup wanted to do something special for his dragon today, even if Toothless didn't recognize the significance of the date. So, Hiccup woke up before the sun, and snuck out of the house without the knowledge of his sleeping dragon. He felt a bit guilty about not waking Toothless up, knowing that the dragon would likely panic at waking up to find Hiccup's bed empty, but the young Viking knew that waking up Toothless would mean that Toothless would follow him, and Hiccup couldn't surprise Toothless like that.

Shaking off subtle feelings of guilt and foreboding, Hiccup scurried off into the forest on his own, realizing as he did so that this was the first time since the battle with the Red Death that he had gone into the forest alone. \_Maybe there's a good reason for that!\_ a

small voice at the back of his head warned. Hiccup disregarded it and continued on.

Nowâ€¦ what to get for Toothless? An extra large bundle of Icelandic cod? A little memento from the cove, maybe? Hiccup wasn't sure. He headed to the cove for inspiration.

Once there, still nothing came to mind, and so Hiccup began to pace around the edges of the cove. His mind wandered with ideas of gifts for his dragon, and he stopped paying attention to his feet â€" er, foot.

With his mind somewhere else entirely, Hiccup was shocked out of his thoughts as his prosthetic tangled into some tall weeds, sending him roughly to the ground and knocking the wind out of him. After a minute, his breath returned and he rolled over onto his back. He had fallen right between the wall of rock that bordered the cove and another large rock looming on his right. His prosthetic, he noticed with immense irritation, was tangled hopelessly in the tall weeds. He laid there for a few minutes, working his prosthetic around, trying to untangle it without having to sit up. Almost thereâ€¦

Suddenly, a loud noise from above him shattered his concentration. He looked up, and wished he hadn't. Somehow, a large boulder from above had become dislodged, and was falling right towards Hiccup. \_Just my luck\_ he thought as the boulder came crashing down, much too fast for him to have moved out of the way, even if his prosthetic had not been caught.

And then, Hiccup nearly cried out in his immense relief. He couldn't believe his luck. The falling boulder was just big enough to be caught between the cove wall and the rock on Hiccup's right, so that it formed a kind of ceiling over Hiccup's body, the bottom tip of the fallen boulder just inches from Hiccup's stomach. He wanted to laugh out loud. When had his luck gotten this good?

Oh, right. It hadn't.

Just as Hiccup began to celebrate his newfound "good luck", the fallen boulder suddenly began to slip down, grinding on the sides of the rocks that held it up. Slowly, ever so slowly, the boulder got nearer and nearer to Hiccup. The boy frantically wormed around, trying to slide out from beneath it, but his prosthetic was stuck, and try as he might, he could not move.

\_Whump!\_ The boulder slid down the last inch and rested firmly on Hiccup's stomach, preventing him from breathing properly. He gasped in short, quick breaths and was powerless to do anything as his vision began to fade. \_I didn't even find anything to surprise Toothless withâ€¦\_ he thought wildly as the darkness closed in. Right before his world went completely black, Hiccup, to his vague astonishment, heard a surprised and horrified roar â€" one that unmistakably belonged to his dragon. \_Well, I managed to surprise him after allâ€¦\_

Toothless had never been more scared in his entire life. Unless, of course, you counted the whole Red Death fiasco. He had woken up in the Haddock house, feeling content and ready for a wonderful morning flight with his human, when he turned to the bed and found it utterly empty. Any and all happy feelings within the dragon vanished

immediately at the sight. Where was Hiccup?!

Worry painfully twisting around his insides, the dragon raced outside, speeding through the village in search of Hiccup. He wasn't in the forge, wasn't at Astrid's house, wasn't at the docks. The only other place he could be was the forest.

With a groan, the dragon hurried into the forest, wondering vaguely if his human really was stupid enough to go into it alone. Where was his Hiccup? Where could he have gone? And then Toothless knew. The cove.

Toothless picked up speed and headed for their special place, trying to soothe his worries on the way there. Hiccup was most likely fine. Toothless would probably find the boy sitting on the lake shore, or cooking up some fish at a newly-built fire. Toothless would tackle the boy, cover him in dragon saliva, and then dunk him in the lake a few times for scaring the Night Fury half to death.

Just as Toothless began to ease his worries, he reached the cove and immediately amended his earlier thought. This was the scariest moment of his life, he realized, as he discovered Hiccup pinned beneath a boulder, gasping for breath and struggling much too weakly, his eyes beginning to slip closed.

With a roar containing the horrified surprise he felt at finding the scene, Toothless charged forward and reached Hiccup just as the Viking's eyes shut and the boy's movements stopped altogether. With such fear as he hadn't felt in a long time, Toothless pushed his head up against the boulder and shoved with all his might. The boulder rolled away and off of Hiccup's prone form.

Toothless watched, for one agonizing second, as Hiccup did not shift, did not twitch, did not breathe. And then, the boy shot up into a sitting position with a choking gasp of air, leaning his upper body weakly on the cove wall. Toothless nudged his face into Hiccup's back, and his human turned and wrapped his arms around Toothless' neck, now leaning weakly into his dragon instead.

"I'm so sorry," Hiccup gasped between gulps of sweet, sweet air. "Thank you for saving me."

They stayed there for an indeterminable amount of time — a few seconds, a few minutes, a few hours — as Hiccup leaned against Toothless, taking steadying breaths, Toothless supporting his breathless human, trying futilely to rid the image of the much-too-still Hiccup from his mind. After a while, Hiccup broke the silence.

"Exactly one year ago today. That was the day I brought you that fish. The day I ate your regurgitated fish. The day we drew in the dirt together. The day we first learned to trust each other." Hiccup sat up straight and looked into his dragon's big green eyes. "I wanted to do something for you, to show my appreciation of your friendship," he explained. "I thought I thought I was going to come out here and find you something you'd really like, something that would make you happy." The dragon let out a sad warble. "I love you, buddy," Hiccup smiled sadly. "I just wanted to make sure you knew."

Toothless, to make his point, nuzzled his head into his human and purred loudly. Even if he could not say it back, Toothless loved his human, too. And even though Hiccup could not know it, the boy had given Toothless something that made him happy " he had sat up with a gasp of breath after Toothless had thought, for a terrible second, that he had lost his human. Toothless could not remember ever feeling so relieved.

After some time of sitting there together, to Hiccup's embarrassment, his stomach began to grumble, and the two of them realized that neither of them had eaten anything at all. Toothless got up and began to walk away, crouching into position for Hiccup to leap onto his back, but Hiccup stayed where he was.

"Toothless, wait!" the young Viking called sheepishly. The blood rose to his cheeks as he gestured to the weeds his prosthetic was still hopelessly tangled in. "I'm a little stuck."

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